DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 045 029

HE 001 866

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TITLE	Faculty Supporters of Change.
INSTITUTION	California Univ., Berkeley. Center for Research and Development in Higher Education.
PUB DATE	70
NOTE	4p.
JOURNAL CIT	Research Reporter; v5 n4 p1-4 1970
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.30
DESCRIPTORS	*Attitudes, *Educational Change, *Faculty, Governance, *Higher Education, Student Motivation, Student Participation, Student Teacher Relationship, Teacher Attitudes, *Teacher Characteristics

ABSTRACT

This paper reports on a survey sent to 1,559 faculty members at 6 widely diverse colleges and universities in 3 states in the fall of 1968. Seventy percent of the questionnaires were returned. The purpose of the questionnaire was to determine faculty attitudes toward educational change and to learn more about the characteristics of those who favored change as contrasted to those who did not. The results indicated that the majority of faculty members favored change, but there were sharp differences between those who did and those who did not. The faculty who favored change were more likely to see the purpose of college education as self-development in students, emphasized personalization in the educative process, held permissive views about student personal life, believed in a theory of teaching and learning emphasizing the self-motivating power of students, and favored giving students significant roles in academic and social policymaking. They tended to be from the junior ranks, politically liberal, non-religious, and taught in the humanities or the social sciences. Those opposed to academic change wanted students to acquire vocational and technical competence, deemphasized the need for close faculty-student relationship, emphasized external motivation, and opposed student participation in governance. Most were from the senior ranks, more conservative, and religious. (AF)

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The Research Reporter

The Center for Research and Development in Higher Education

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

Volume V Number 4, 1970

ED 045029

FACULTY SUPPORTERS OF CHANGE

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The accusation is often made that college faculty members are opposed to educational change. The stereotype in the popular press and in much of the educational literature is that they are insensitive to students needs and interests; that they are more interested in research, consulting, and attending meetings than in teaching; and that they are *the* major block to making college education more relevant.

Recent data indicate that this stereotype is true only for a minority of faculty members. Actually, the *majority* of faculty in our study favor most of the various educational changes shown in the table (page 2).

These data were gathered through a survey questionnaire that was mailed to 1,559 full-time faculty members at six widely diverse colleges and universities in three states in the fall of 1968. Each of the institutions selected represents a different type: a campus of a large state university, a large state college, a medium-sized public junior college, a medium-sized private suburban university, a small denominational college, and finally, a small selective liberal arts college.

A total of 1,085 questionnaires were returned for a gross response rate of 70 percent; the 954 questionnaires containing answers to at least 95 percent of the items were used in the present analysis.

In order to learn more about the characteristics of faculty members who favor change as contrasted with those who do not favor change, eight items measuring attitudes toward a sampling of current educational change issues were combined into an index of change orientation. Each faculty member was given a score on this scale, and the entire sample was trichotomized into high, middle, and low scoring groups. Those who scored high differed in important ways from those who scored low.

EDUCATIONAL ATTITUDES

Of fundamental significance is the fact that they had different conceptions of the purposes of an undergraduate education. The pro-change group tended to endorse self-development as the most important goal of education while the anti-change group tended to favor the development of vocational and technical competence.

The respondents were asked to choose, from a list of six educational goals the one they regarded as most important. "Self-knowledge and a sense of personal identity" was chosen by 35 percent of the high-change group and only 13 percent of the low-change group. Alternatives concerned with preparation for a career and mastery of a specialized body of knowledge were chosen by 38 percent of the low-change group and only 15 percent of the high-change group.

Personalization of Faculty-Student Relations. In keeping with their goals of education, the group most

Strategies for Relevance

The term "relevance" may be one of the most overused and least understood concepts in modern higher education. According to Webster's, relevance implies a "traceable, significant, logical connection . . . bearing on the matter at hand."

Students, especially, have been vocal in their assertions that the "connections" between their education and the matter at hand, which is the state of the world in which they live as human beings, workers, and members of troubled society, are rusted and inoperative.

Some Center staff members gave their attention to the subject of Strategies for Relevance in a symposium at the 1970 Western Psychological Association meetings. These three papers, revised for The Research Reporter, *consider examples of student, faculty, and institutional responses to the demands for relevance.*

K.P.C.

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Faculty Attitudes toward Selected Educational Changes

	Increased	Left the Same	Decreased
Proportion of students from minority groups	78%[1]	22%	1%
Amount of informal interaction between faculty and students	71	28	1
Proportion of interdisciplinary courses	68	28	4
Use of independent study	67	31	2
Proportion of courses directed at contemporary social problems	59	37	4
Extent to which students help to determine the content of courses	40	54	6

	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
Students should be allowed to earn academic credit by working in community projects directly related to their academic interests	39%	43%	11%	7%
Colleges should lower their formal admission requirements in order to accept more students from minority groups	15	37	26	22

[1]Percentage of the sample (N = 954) giving the response.

in favor of change is more concerned with students' personal development. They scored higher than the change-resistant group, on a scale composed of items such as: "The emotional and personal development of a student should be as important to a teacher as his intellectual development" and "Students learn class material best if a teacher takes a personal interest in them." In contrast, the group most opposed to change tends to reject personalization of the educative process.

Regulation of Personal Behavior. Most faculty hold rather permissive attitudes toward the regulation of students' personal lives, but those who are most favorable to change are far more permissive. When a scale composed of items concerning college rules about the use of alcohol, womens' dormitory hours, premarital cohabitation, the use of marijuana, and similar issues was trichotomized, 52 percent of the faculty favoring change were in the most permissive category as compared with only 12 percent of the group most opposed to change. The pro-changers' view is consistent with the idea that students' self development is facilitated by the freedom to make decisions about their personal lives and to learn from the consequences. The anti-changers tend to believe, as seen in their answers to another item, that ". . . few students are capable of using these freedoms responsibly."

Skepticism About Student Motivation. The group most opposed to change tended to hold a no-nonsense approach to teaching and to value the fundamentals. They expressed greater agreement on items such as: "Students too often want to speculate on important issues before they master the relevant basic facts," "Without tests and grades to prod them, most students would learn little." In contrast, the pro-change group tended to express greater faith in the academic motivation of students, a view consonant with their confidence in the ability of students to benefit from the absence of externally imposed social rules and regulations.

Student Participation in Governance. Students have maintained that one of the necessary changes for higher education is the active participation of students in the governance of their colleges. Questions were asked of faculty about the role students should have in determining academic and social policies. Change-oriented faculty are far more inclined to have students participate in both the academic and the non-academic governance of their schools than are faculty who oppose change. Both groups, however, are more conservative about student participation in academic policymaking than in making policies concerning students' social lives (Wilson and Gaff, 1969).

TEACHING PRACTICES

Three scales from the analysis are concerned with classroom teaching practices. Faculty members who favor educational change scored significantly higher on a scale entitled *Conceptual-Discursiveness* which is composed of items such as: "Discuss points of view other than my own" and "Relate the course work to other fields of study." They also scored higher on a *Class Participation* scale consisting of items such as: "Invite students to help make class plans and policy" and "Invite student criticism of my ideas." On an *Examination and Evaluation Procedures* scale, the pro-changers scored in the direction of less structured procedures such as essay exams and term papers, while the anti-changers scored in the direction of more structured procedures such as objective exams and marking on a curve.

Not all teaching takes place in the classroom. What about the attention faculty members give to students outside of class? A set of questions asked respondents how many times during the previous two weeks they had met with students in a variety of capacities; as an educational advisor, career advisor, counselor, instructor, campus citizen or friend. A score was computed for total number of contacts. It was found that faculty who favor educational change had significantly more out of class contact with students than those opposed to change.

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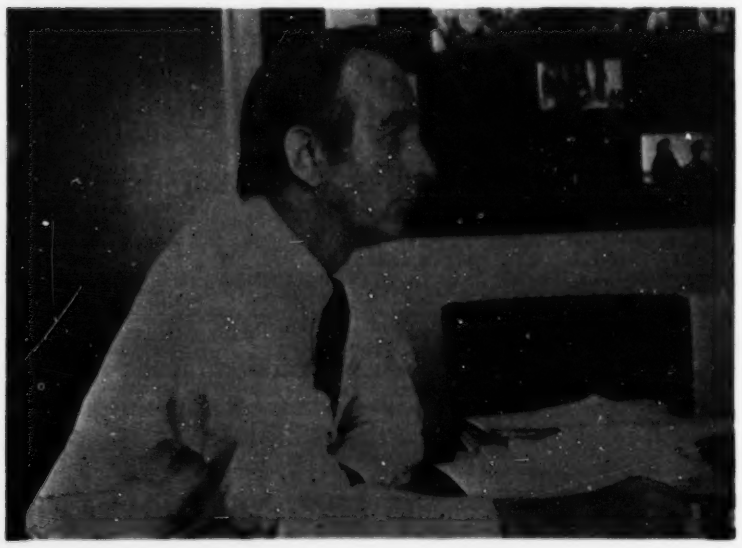
STATUS CHARACTERISTICS

Information was obtained on the rank, department, and sex of the respondents. Significantly more of those favoring change were from the lower ranks and from the humanities and social sciences rather than the natural sciences or applied fields.

As far as sex is concerned, women were overrepresented in the group favoring change. This may be an artifact of woman's "place" in academe or a confounding with the preceding two variables since women were found in larger proportions in the lower ranks and in the humanities. Questions about politics and religion revealed a larger proportion of those who favored change describing themselves as more liberal politically and less religious than those opposing change.

In summary, faculty who favor educational change are more likely to see the purpose of a college education as self development in students, are more likely to emphasize personalization in the educative process, to have permissive views toward student personal life, to hold a theory of teaching and learning which emphasizes the self-motivating power of students, and to favor giving students significant roles in both academic and social policymaking. In their classroom teaching they are more likely to be discursive, to encourage student participation, and to employ less structured evaluation procedures. They also have considerable contact with students outside of class. Such faculty members are more likely to be from the junior ranks and from the fields of humanities and social sciences. They tend to be politically liberal and non-religious.



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On the other hand, professors who oppose academic change are more likely to want students to acquire vocational and technical competence, to deemphasize the need for close faculty-student relationships, to hold more restrictive views of student personal life, to have a theory of teaching and learning which emphasizes the importance of external motivations, and to deny students a significant role in either academic or social policymaking. In their teaching they are more likely to emphasize factual understanding, to be instructor-centered, to employ structured evaluation procedures, and to have little contact with students outside of class. They are disproportionately drawn from the senior ranks and from the fields of the natural and applied sciences. They tend to be more politically conservative and moderately religious.

NON-DIFFERENCES

In order to make these profiles more useful, it is important to point out some variables that did not differentiate professors who favor and oppose change. The groups did not differ in terms of the number of books published or papers read at professional meetings, the number of national professional associations to which they belong, the number of national professional association meetings attended within the last three years, the percentage of respondents checking "scholarly pursuits" as a major source of satisfaction in their lives, and the relative importance they attach to research and scholarly activity in promotion and salary decisions.

Another non-difference between groups has to do with responsible teaching practices. Most professors in each group said they usually "describe objectives at the beginning of the class session," "Summarize at the end of class the major points discussed," and "Keep office hours." In addition, the groups did not differ in terms of student advising. Most of each group said they had talked with students during the prior two weeks about matters related to their educational programs or vocational plans. In general, both groups seem to meet these minimal professional standards as

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responsible teachers; they differ mainly in the way they conceive of and carry out their teaching.

Contrary to the popular stereotype and much of the current speculative literature, there appears to be a large reservoir of faculty sentiment favoring some changes in educational practices. It would seem that the main problem for educational reformers is not that of convincing faculty members of the need for change, but rather the problem of mobilizing existing sentiment to make college education more relevant.

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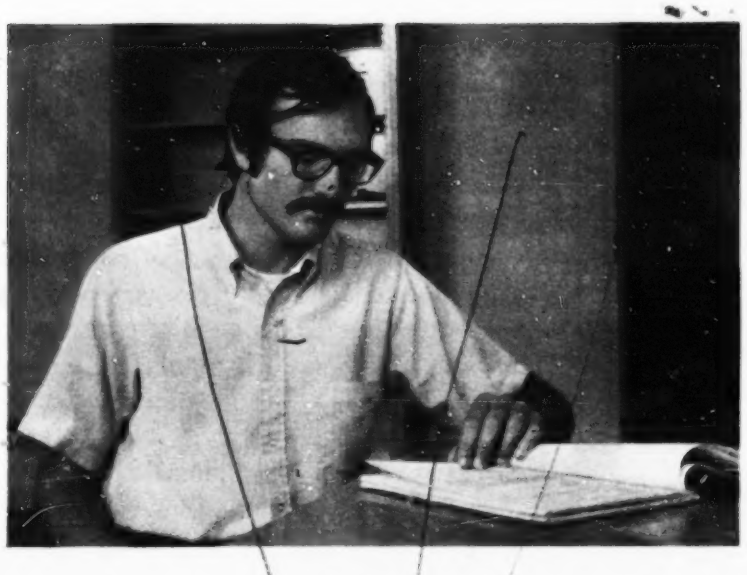
RELEVANT TO WHOM?



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One of the principal problems involved in achieving educational relevance is that experiences which further the goals, interests, needs, and social values of one student may be irrelevant to another. In response to student discontent, some colleges have made provisions for students to select and create courses which they may regard as personally relevant. Findings from a study of the characteristics of undergraduates taking student-initiated courses at the University of California at Berkeley in the spring of 1968 illustrate the significance of student initiative for making higher education more relevant.[1]

These courses are planned and organized by students with a highly variable degree of faculty participation. They are often graded on a pass/no pass basis and most of the class time is spent in small discussion groups. The students are typically required to submit papers based on individual study, and the courses are usually taught by students, members of the community at large, or faculty who donate their time.

Four orientations differentiated the students enrolled in student-initiated courses from a random sample of Berkeley undergraduates. When compared with those in the control group, the students who chose to take the student-designed courses were less interested in college as a means of vocational preparation, more oriented toward effecting social change, more aesthetically inclined, and more concerned with interpersonal relationships. These orientations are inconsistent with the emphases of the regular undergraduate curriculum at Berkeley, which like most traditional college and university courses throughout the country, are concerned with vocational and professional certification and training. It is not surprising then that students valuing personal development or social change feel the need to seek relevance outside the established curriculum.

Predictably, students in student-initiated courses were very dissatisfied with their education. Much more frequently than the students in the control group, they agreed that "University academic programs are unrelated to the central problems of my life" and that "Some of the best students drop out because they do not want to 'play the game' or 'beat the system'." These and other expressions of dissatisfaction on the questionnaire items indicate the irrelevance of most undergraduate courses to the goals, needs, interests, and values of

[1]For an intensive discussion of research methodology and presentation of data, see: Bess, J., & Bilorusky, J. Curriculum hypocrises: studies of student initiated courses. *Universities Quarterly*, 1970, 24(3), 291-309.